

PORTSMOUTH SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES, MAY 19, 2009

LITTLE HARBOUR BOARD ROOM

PORTSMOUTH, NH

DATE: TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2009

TIME: 7:15PM

5:30-6:00 P.M. – Special Public Meeting – Little Harbour Elementary School to watch a “Smart Board” demonstration in a second grade classroom.

6:00 – 7:00 P.M. – A Special Meeting will be held for board members to recognize retiring school employees.

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

Present: DR. MITCHELL SHULDMAN (CHAIR), SHERI HAM-GARRITY (VICE-CHAIR), REBECCA EMERSON, PATRICK ELLIS, KENT LAPAGE, ANN WALKER, LESLIE STEVENS, LISA SWEET, ANN MAYER (SAU50 REPRESENTATIVE), LINDA BRIOLAT (EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE) AND ABIGAIL ROCKEFELLER (STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE)

Absent: DEXTER LEGG

III. INVOCATION

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Chair Shuldman led in the pledge of allegiance.

V. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

1. NONE

VI. COMMUNICATIONS

1. Middle School Project Safety email from PMS Principal, John Stokel – Dr. Lister acknowledged Mr. Stokel and Ms. Susan Christmas for writing grants necessary to bring this important project back to the middle school and for successfully involving the community. Karen Webb, a PMS parent, was instrumental as well. Next Tuesday, the project will once again run and Dr. Lister encouraged board members to stop by.
2. Letter on Underage Drinking from Police Chief Magnant and PHS Principal, Jeff Collins – Annual letter sent out collaboratively regarding underage drinking at this time of year. Dr. Lister is also sending an email out to all high school students and their families regarding prom time and graduation.
3. Other

VII. RECOGNITION/UPDATE OF STAFF AND STUDENTS

2009 Retirements/Retirees -Dr. Lister reported that this year's retirees have a cumulative 378 years of service given to the Portsmouth School District.

The following teachers will retire June 30, 2009:

Retirees		Retire Date	Number of years
Jim Andrews		06-30-09	29
Robin Burdick	Administrator	06-30-09	36
Janice Fortunato		06-30-09	30
Paulette Hoeflich	Administrator	06-30-09	28
Kent Hubbard		06-30-09	40
Robert Lister	Administrator	06-30-09	33
Michael Modern		06-30-09	29
Carol Melchor		06-30-09	11
Joan Christy		06-30-09	30
David Jule		06-30-09	11

Little Harbour Second grade teachers - whiteboard presentation by Ms. Jaime Trudel, Ms. Britt Holmes and Ms. Lisa Albright-The excitement surrounding this new technology and its integration into our elementary schools is evident. Ms. Emerson asked other board members how they felt about writing a policy or a stipulation stating that all elementary classrooms should eventually have whiteboards. All whiteboards received to date have been purchased by grants. Chair Shuldman stated that it would be important to consider putting whiteboards in the next budget cycle.

Abigail Rockefeller – will be attending Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. Ms. Rockefeller was presented with a clock for her years of student representation and the board wishes her well during her college years. Portsmouth High school will have an election next fall, where the new student representative will be chosen.

Evelyn Sirrell - Mr. LaPage stated that a very important part of Portsmouth had passed on – Ms. Evelyn Sirrell, a former Portsmouth Mayor, was a good communicator and an outstanding individual who believed in hands off when it came to the school budget. Ms. Sirrell was also an active parent, with three outstanding sons in the community.

Fosters series by John Shea - Ms. Stevens stated that Mr. Shea, principal of Spaulding High School and parent of children who attend Little Harbour, is writing a series of articles for Foster's, regarding high school education. Ms. Stevens stated that Mr. Shea has a way of bringing new ideas to the table. She recommended board members to read the articles as they are published over the next few weeks.

Resignation – Ms. Kathy Pearce – Library Media Specialist. Ms. Pearce was hired in 1996 and will complete 13 years with the Portsmouth School Department.

Motion: Motion to accept the resignation of Ms. Kathy Pearce by Ms. Walker

Second: Ms. Garrity

Discussion:

Vote: Unanimously approved

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION

1. Other

IX. FINANCIAL

1. **Stimulus Update** – The state of New Hampshire has set aside \$32 million dollars for school construction and renovation projects. The City Manager authorized Mr. Bartlett and Mr. Linchey to put together a proposal for \$2 million dollars in interest free bond projects. Mr. Bartlett and Mr. Linchey created list of projects and classified the projects to match up with available funds. Projects were picked that will have long-term benefits, but not be an impediment to any future plans.

This is a competitive process. If accepted, the plan would accelerate the district's replacement schedule by approximately eight years. Due to the quick deadline, only 9 applications were submitted to the state. On Thursday, May 28, 2009, at 4 pm, a 10-minute presentation will be made in Concord.

Title I - Still waiting for further direction from the federal government.

Dr. Lister thanked Mr. Bartlett for all the time and energy that he has put into submitting all necessary paperwork and for the many hours he has been on the phone and in Concord, trying to stay on top of stimulus information as it is released. There is a reason why many people did not apply for funding.

Mr. Bartlett also clarified that any monies received for renovations or construction will go through the city and fall under the cities bonding load. It would not be reflected in the school budget.

Mr. Zadavec putting together a plan on how the district will spend stimulus funds under the many restrictions mandated by the federal government. The document will also be made available to the public.

School board members expressed their frustration and disappointment with the entire process. Many individuals have put in endless hours to receive funds that the board would never use in the way the federal government is mandating that they use it.

2. Other

X. AGENDA

1. **Vote - Superintendent's recommendation for 0% increase for FY2009-2010**

Budget –Mr. LaPage reminded board members that a two thirds vote was necessary to retract the original recommendation sent to City Council and accept a new recommendation from the Superintendent of 0%.

Motion: Motion to retract the original recommendation sent to City Council and accepts a new recommendation from the Superintendent of 0% by Ms. Emerson

Second: Ms. Walker

Discussion: Mr. LaPage stated that he believed the board has worked extremely hard listening to the public and still remain fiscally responsible. He believes the budget submitted reflects their hard work and certainly does not contain “fluff” that can now be removed. A year from now, the budget will demand a 4% increase, due to salary increases and Mr. LaPage believes this would be catastrophic. Other board members expressed their disappointment that the mayor was not only asking for a 0% scenario, but for other scenarios as high as \$785,000. Mr. Ellis requested that the minutes reflect that this was never discussed.

Vote: Roll call vote– 7 Aye, 1 Nay (KL)

Motion: Motion to accept the recommendation from Supt to bring budget down to 0% by Ms. Emerson

Second: Ms. Walker

Discussion: A lengthy discussion ensued, with board members highlighting the following:

- If the board does not vote to submit the 0% increase budget, as recommended by the Superintendent, the City Council could not only vote the submitted budget down, but could require the board to cut more than 0%.
- The board listened to the public and understands that schools are being squeezed too tight. Cuts are now being made that may impact student support, teacher's morale and their ability to teach effectively.
- The school board will need City Council's cooperation in future projects, such as the middle school. It behooves the board politically to “play ball” with City Council.
- The 0% increase came from seasoned teachers retiring and hiring new teachers at a lower pay scale. Some positions are not being filled at all. Mr. Ellis is not comfortable with this. He would much prefer to hire for all open positions. The schools are at a tipping point.
- Fire and police will be able to re-appear before City Council for supplemental budget requests. The school board will not have this choice.
- The 0% increase counts on the 2009-2010 school year being a mild winter.

Dr. Lister stated that the recommended budget before the board was not a budget that he is comfortable submitting. Unfortunately, he believes the handwriting to be on the wall. City Council will not accept anything less than 0%. They may even ask for more to be cut. He agrees with what Mr. LaPage and Mr. Ellis have stated, but is recommending that the board pass the 0% budget increase.

Vote: 5 Aye, 3 Nay (PE, KL, SG) Motion passes.

2. **Vote on Tentative Agreements -**

Motion: Motion to remove the four previous contracts that were submitted to City Council by Ms. Walker. (Paraprofessional, clerical, administrative and custodian supervisor's.)

Second: Ms. Garrity

Discussion: The school board noted that proper procedure has not been followed regarding these four contracts. The board approved all four union contracts and sent them on to City Council. City Council sent them back without voting them down. It was noted that, even though all four unions voted on ratified contracts, the unions were extremely unhappy with the entire process.

Chair Shuldman expressed concern with City Council attempting to extract funds from unions set aside for the negotiation process. Mr. LaPage also believes that unfair negotiation practices will be filed.

Vote: Roll Call – 5 Aye, 3 Nay (KL, LS, RE) Motion fails.

Motion: Motion to open paraprofessional contract.

Second: Ms. Garrity

Discussion: The board has already made their position known that they are uncomfortable with the entire process. Unions voted. The board would now become the obstacle if the ratified contracts were not approved and sent onto City Council. Union members are concerned that they will receive nothing if they do not submit a ratified contract soon. Mr. LaPage asked for assurance that the unions understood the ramifications of the newly agreed upon contract. For an employee making \$60,000/year, the 2010 raise they will no longer receive constitutes a \$12,000 loss. Did the union representatives make this clear to their members?

Ms. Emerson expressed frustration in fulfilling all expectations from City Council during the entire negotiation process only to end up with a completely ratified contract hastily being prepared for submission.

Ms. Briolat stated that \$1 million was set aside for teacher negotiations and only \$580,000 was used. Where did the rest of the money end up? Ms. Briolat believes the board should send the original negotiated contracts back to City Council and ask them to approve or reject them. All four contracts were mistakenly held up and the board may be setting themselves up with unfair practice claims being filed.

Mr. Ellis stated that, if unions were polled, the majority would want the board to approve the ratified contracts. All board members are on record with their displeasure and disbelief on how this entire process has been handled. If lawsuit is filed, the board will be on record stating that they believe City Council and the mayor handled this improperly.

Chair Shuldman stated that a letter was written to all four union representatives, stating that if they wanted the board to stand behind the original submitted contracts, the board would. If the board does not pass the newly negotiated agreement, the unions will suffer.

Vote: 7 Aye, 1 Nay (KL) Motion passes.

Motion: Motion to accept the ratified paraprofessional union contract by Ms. Walker

Second: Ms. Stevens

Vote: 7 Aye, 1 Nay (KL) Motion passes

Motion: Motion to open the clerical, supervisor custodial and administrator contracts by Mr. Ellis

Second: Ms. Walker

Discussion:

Vote: 7 Aye, 1 Nay (KL) Motion passes

Motion: Motion to accept the ratified clerical contract by Ms. Emerson

Second: Ms. Walker

Discussion:

Vote: 7 Aye, 1 Nay (KL) Motion passes

Motion: Motion to accept the ratified administrator contract by Ms. Garrity

Second: Ms. Stevens

Discussion:

Vote: 7 Aye, 1 Nay (KL) Motion passes

Motion: Motion to accept the ratified custodial supervisors by Ms. Stevens

Second: Ms. Walker

Discussion:

Vote: 7 Aye, 1 Nay (KL) Motion passes

Motion: Motion that the board seek legal advice from the city attorney how the board should negotiate the two contracts still without tentative agreements by Mr. LaPage

Second: Ms. Stevens

Discussion:

Vote: unanimous

3. **Middle school update –**

Mr. Bartlett reported that Mr. Ed Murdough, from the Department of Education, went last week to testify before the legislature about construction projects recently cut from the state budget. At the time, Mr. Murdough firmly believed that the vote to fund construction projects already approved would pass. Mr. Bartlett is not optimistic that the state is going to reinstate construction funding back into the budget and suggests that, even if the state does not reinstate construction funding, the board send a letter to city council, suggesting they move forward with phase II and the hiring of JCJ Architects.

Based on a recent meeting from the recreation board, there are four athletic field sites being assessed. Two are public. Two are not.

4. **Early Release Days for 2009-2010 –**Early Release days allow the entire staff, including paraprofessionals, to participate in professional growth.

Motion: Motion to approve Early Release Days for 2009-2010 by Ms. Emerson

Second: Mr. Ellis

Discussion: After board members expressed concern with the amount of ER days, it was decided that Mr. Zadavec would revisit the ER schedule and present the board with additional information. **Ms. Emerson withdraws her motion.**

Motion: Motion to continue past 10:00 p.m. by Ms. Emerson

Second: Mr. Ellis

Vote: 5 Aye, 3 Nay Motion passes

5. **Approve tentative School Board Meeting Dates for 2009-2010** – Dates will be double checked with city hall and voted on at the next regularly scheduled school board meeting.
6. Chair Shuldman publicly thanked the teachers union in agreeing to provide \$567,000 from the professional fund in an attempt to reach a 0% increased budget. Chair Shuldman also stated that the new superintendent, Mr. Ed McDonough, has been following Portsmouth's budget battle and is willing to give back 3% of his pay.

XI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Educational Channel Update – An initial conversation about an educational channel was held on May 12, 2009. The committee decided to further discuss over the next year if an educational channel makes sense. Chair Shuldman also stated that the city receives \$350,000/year from a cable franchise fee. Only \$30,000 is used to fund the government channel. If the committee moves forward, this could be a potential way to fund the new educational channel.
2. Policy Committee – The policy committee presented a first reading on attendance, defining truancy better. Mr. LaPage requested that “any student dismissed for non-excused or illness may not participate in extra curricular activities” be added.

Motion: Motion to pass the Attendance Policy - first reading by Ms. Emerson

Second: Ms. Walker

Discussion:

Vote: unanimously approved

3. Other: the senior class approached Ms. Rockefeller. They would like everyone to receive the same treatment and have their graduation diplomas handed to them by the same person. Dr. Lister stated that it was long time tradition for school board members and city officials to hand students diplomas. The board unanimously agreed that this was not a school board decision and should be handled by the superintendent. Dr. Lister agreed to meet with the principal regarding this issue.

XII. NEXT AGENDA ITEMS (June 9, 2009 Council Chambers, City Hall)

1. Update from Susan Birrell re: Top 10 technology projects/school
2. Mr. Ed McDonough
3. Other

XIII. ADJOURNMENT -

Motion: Motion to adjourn at 10:40 pm by Ms. Walker

Second: Mr. Ellis

Vote: Unanimously approved

Respectfully submitted by:
Dr. Robert J. Lister
Superintendent of Schools